

N45 Deputy Director Discusses Efforts to Enhance Awareness, “Green” the Acquisition Process & Keep Environmental Planning on Track

WELCOME TO THE spring 2010 issue of *Currents*, the Navy’s award-winning environmental quarterly magazine. In this column I’d like to address three important focus areas in the Navy environmental program:

1. Enhancing awareness of Navy environmental stewardship,
2. Environmental readiness in acquisition, and
3. The future direction of environmental planning for training and testing at sea.

Enhancing Awareness of Navy Environmental Stewardship

This issue of *Currents* features an interview with Mr. Brock Evans, President of the Endangered Species Coalition. We are delighted to share Brock’s message with *Currents* readers, as part of the Navy’s continuing efforts to build understanding and forge alliances with the environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) community. The military services and organizations like the Endangered Species Coalition share many common interests. This partnership offers tremendous opportuni-

ties for cooperation in protecting both national security and America’s magnificent environment. Acreage devoted to military training or to buffer zones around military installations is often far more hospitable to wildlife than it would be if subject to development. Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans developed by military installations are concrete examples of how an appropriate balance of military and environmental interests can be achieved.

out to a variety of stakeholders. The Navy Active Sonar Action Plan, signed in early March 2010 by Vice Admiral Mike Loose, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Fleet Readiness and Logistics (OPNAV N4), reaffirmed the need for strategic communication with stakeholders about Navy environmental performance.



The first-ever Navy Environmental Forum with substantial participation by NGOs and the regulatory community was held in late March 2010. In April 2010, we made available to NGO and other stakeholders an overview of the Navy marine mammal research program, and took input on future directions. In cooperation with the Navy Secretariat, proactive outreach efforts to Congress, federal agencies, academia and other stakeholders will continue, with a view toward coordination of such outreach efforts throughout the Navy. The understanding and synergy developed through these contacts will help us be more effective and efficient in our environmental mission, while reducing the likelihood of litigation, which could impede our national defense mission.

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As part of the overall strategy to enhance awareness of Navy environmental stewardship, we continue to reach

Environmental Readiness in Acquisition

Environmental Readiness in Acquisition means the ability of new systems to be used in realistic training and exercises, in full compliance with environmental requirements, upon delivery to the Fleets. First addressed in the winter 2009 issue of *Currents*, we’ve made a lot of progress in this area over the past year.

In June 2009, the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) published a study concluding that existing acquisition regulations and practices did not sufficiently incentivize

acquisition program officials to ensure environmental readiness in acquisition. The CNA study made several recommendations for policy and practice changes, which OPNAV N4 and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (Acquisition and Logistics Management) shared with acquisition Program Executive Officers (PEO) and the naval research community. One immediate effect was to more fully involve PEOs and the Office of Naval Research in environmental planning for the five-year renewals of range and operating area environmental impact statements (EIS). This will help ensure that systems reaching Initial Operational Capability (IOC) when the renewal EISs will be in effect, the period from 2014 through 2020, will be environmentally ready.

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Building on the CNA report, we here at the Chief of Naval Operations Environmental Readiness Division (N45) spearheaded the inclusion of two significant changes in Navy acquisition regulations. First, an environmental review will be incorporated into the Analysis of Alternatives, a step that occurs early in the requirements development process. Second, Gate Reviews will include enhanced environmental oversight to ensure that end users of systems have factored the new system into ongoing and planned environmental analysis. When fully implemented, these process improvements will ensure that new systems are designed, built and delivered with appropriate consideration of lifecycle environmental compliance requirements.

Environmental Planning at Sea

Environmental compliance in training and testing at sea remains the number one environmental challenge to Navy readiness. As of the spring of 2010, we have completed environmental planning, permitting and consultations for eight training, testing and operating areas at sea, with another six to be completed within the next year. Once completed, however, these efforts will mark only the beginning of a continuous cycle of high stakes environmental planning work. Under current regulatory practice, annual renewals will be required for continued training and testing in each area, supported by

extensive reporting and consultation requirements.

Sustained environmental planning for training and testing at sea, and extension of environmental coverage for activities beyond training ranges and operating areas, is a daunting challenge. It calls not only for an unprecedented commitment of Navy resources, but for similar commitments by regulatory agencies. Any glitch in this continuous environmental planning process could result in suspension of critical Navy training and testing at sea if renewals are not completed on time, as occurred in the Hawaii Range Complex in January 2010. Fleet and systems command action proponents, along with N45 and the Navy Secretariat, are acutely aware of the need for timely completion of these requirements. N45 and higher OPNAV and Secretary of the Navy authority are continuously engaged with the regulatory community in an effort to keep things on track. Over time, this intensive environmental planning process should become smoother, as Navy and the regulatory community adapt to the “new normal” in terms of planning workload.



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Conclusion

The months and years ahead will be interesting and busy in the Navy environmental arena. While sonar has been the principal focus over the past several years, other significant challenges are emerging, such as carbon footprint reduction and coastal and marine spatial planning. I'm confident that the men and women of the Navy's environmental programs will lead the way to ensure continued environmental stewardship as we carry out our national defense mission. Thanks for all you do. 🙏

All the best,
John Quinn, Deputy Director
Environmental Readiness Division